

Interview with  
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I went down to Hemet on the weekend to see about interviewing some men there. The apricot season is going on full swing right now. I found a group of nine men who were working on a farm where there was an orchard and also an apricot cutting shed, and I had a pretty good talk with them. I began very informally without letting on that I was doing research of any kind. I just talked to them on a man-to-man basis, after I had got to know them a little bit this way, I asked them, ~~if~~ if I were to ask you some questions from a piece of paper like this and write down the answers, would you give me the answers? Well, they were a little bit reluctant at first. They had a considerable amount of discussion within the group back and forth, until finally they came back to me and said that it would be O.K. and they would give me the true answers.

Well, as it worked out I didn't write down the answers on this trip but what I did was ask some of the questions from the form and I can remember most of the things that they said. For example, they told me about conditions at Empalhme. They said that there are thousands of men standing in line for days at a time just waiting. They said the men don't dare leave the lines for meals or anything else, because they are afraid of missing out on their big chance. ~~There~~, of course, even after you stand in line and finally get to the head of the line it's still a gamble, because they told me that out of every thousand men perhaps only one hundred <sup>will</sup> ~~will~~ actually be chosen to come to the United States. It all depends on how much you are able to pay and who you know. Another thing that they told me about Empalhme, is that it is a very dirty town and they all said that they were happy to get out of there.

I asked the men how much they were getting paid. They said, "We don't know. Somebody told us 85¢ an hour, but it all depends on the man

we are working for, and he hasn't settled up with us yet." This sounds like the sort of thing I had heard about, which is one of the reasons I went down to Hemet. I heard that sometimes the crew leaders may hold out as much as 10¢ or 15¢ per hour from every man's pay; so the men don't know until payday whether they have received 85¢ an hour or whether the contractor has kept a slice, so that they only end up with, say, 75¢ an hour.

I asked them if any of them had been sick while they were in this country. One man told me the following story, he said: "I had a stomach-ache not too long ago. I told the boss about it and he told me to go into town to see the doctor, so I did. The doctor gave me some pills. When I got back to camp I showed these pills to some friends of mine, they told me they were exactly the same kind of pills that they had been given when they had gone to see the doctor about colds and headaches, and different things like that. Well, that didn't sound quite right to me, but I took some of the pills anyway. They didn't do me any good at all. So I stopped taking them and finally got well by myself. Just recently since I have been working among the apricots, I got sick again I hurt my back while lifting the trays of cut apricots. But this time I won't go back to that doctor again. I don't know exactly what I will do, but I won't see him because he doesn't help me."

I asked the men about the food that they get in the camp here. They didn't seem to have any particular likes or dislikes; as far as the quality of the food is concerned, it seems to be just ordinary plain food. But they did mention one thing that they are pretty unhappy about. It seems that the cooks in the camp are a little lazy and what they do is to

prepare large quantities of one particular kind of food and to serve that dish for three or four days straight. You can see that this saves them a lot of work, but the men don't like it. They get awfully tired of having macaroni, for example, every meal for three or four days in a row.

I asked the men if they were able to send much money home. The told me "yes" they send money home regularly, but they also told me that they always hold back a little; in other words they don't send all their money home. The reason for this seems to be that many of them are afraid of what their wives may be doing with the money. They are afraid, for ~~example~~ example, that their wife may be spending it on another man. Also, some of them have had the experience of having their letters containing checks or money orders stolen or strayed in the mail, so this is another reason why they ~~are~~ keep some of the money with them in this country.

I asked the men if they would be interested in taking classes in certain subjects in their off duty hours. I asked them if they would be interested in learning the English language, for example. They said "yes", they didn't expect to be able to learn English perfectly, but they would definitely like to know enough English so that they could get around on the public transportation, for example, and so that they could understand the orders that their boss gives them. It seems that several of the employers and foremen around here don't speak anything but English.

Most of the men that I had talked to were in this area for the first time, only one man among the nine had been assigned to the Hemet camp before. He likes it very much and wants to come back again. I asked the others about this and they said "yes" they would be willing, in fact, they would be happy if they could return to this camp again. I guess that this goes to show that even though they have plenty of complaints

about things here, they are better here than they are in many ~~other~~ of the other camps.

I also got to talking with one of the girls who was working in the ~~Hemet~~ apricot cutting shed and she told me some interesting things.

She told me that she had formerly worked in the Hemet Farmers' Association Camp as a clerk. She told me that one day she overheard the manager ~~of~~ saying to another man, "Keep these nationals separated while they are on the job just as much ~~you~~ as you possibly can. We don't want them talking to each other because that only leads to trouble".